United Nations A/54/131 - E/1999/75

General Assembly
Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
10 June 1999

Original: English

General Assembly
Fifty-fourth session
Item 101 (a) of the preliminary list*
Environment and sustainable development: implementation of Agenda 21 and the Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21

Economic and Social Council
Substantive session of 1999
Geneva, 5–30 July 1999
Item 13 (a) of the provisional agenda**
Economic and environmental questions: sustainable development

Measures taken in the United Nations system to accelerate progress in the implementation of Agenda 21 and the Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21

Report of the Secretary-General

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* A/54/50.
** E/1999/100 and Add.1.

99-17647 (E) 230699

Introduction

1. The General Assembly, at its fifty-third session, adopted resolution 53/188 of 15 December 1998, entitled "Implementation of and follow-up to the outcome of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development and the nineteenth special session of the General Assembly", in which the Assembly, *inter alia*, underscored the importance of continued active and collaborative involvement of all relevant bodies of the United Nations system in the implementation of Agenda 21[1] and the Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21,[2] and requested the Secretary-General, in close collaboration with all relevant bodies of the United Nations system and taking into account the outcome of the deliberations of the Commission on Sustainable Development, to submit to the Assembly for its consideration at future sessions, through the Economic and Social Council in view of its coordination function, an analytical report on measures taken within the United Nations system to accelerate the implementation of Agenda 21 and the Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21, including identification of constraints and recommendations on how to address those constraints.

2. In follow-up to this request of the General Assembly, the Inter-Agency Committee on Sustainable Development (IACSD), at its thirteenth meeting (New York, 8 and 9 March 1999), discussed the scope of and agreed on the modalities for preparation of such reports (see ACC/1999/1). The Committee felt that such a report would not attempt to provide a comprehensive annual assessment of United Nations system-wide activities in the field of sustainable development (since such assessments were carried out for the Commission on Sustainable Development in relation to specific themes in the Commission's agenda and also in the context of "five-year reviews"), but should rather summarize the efforts undertaken in the United Nations system to implement Agenda 21 and the outcome of the nineteenth special session of the General Assembly and highlight the main conclusions reached by IACSD and the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) that needed to be brought to the attention of member States in the Economic and Social Council and the Assembly. Consequently, it was agreed that the reports would not describe activities carried out by United Nations organizations but should focus on strategic matters related to collaboration within the United Nations system in the field of sustainable development, analyse the main challenges and constraints in that area and provide a brief update of actions required in follow-up to the work of the Commission and other intergovernmental bodies, as appropriate.

I. Work under way in the United Nations system to accelerate the implementation of Agenda 21 and the Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21, adopted by the General Assembly at its nineteenth special session in 1997

Background

3. In November 1992, ACC established, as its standing subsidiary body, IACSD. The main goals of IACSD would be to promote cooperation and joint action within the United Nations system with a view to supporting the implementation of Agenda 21 and other outcomes of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, as well as to ensure coordinated responses from the United Nations system to the work of the Commission on Sustainable Development and other intergovernmental bodies and processes in the area of sustainable development.

4. IACSD has adopted an innovative approach to meeting these tasks through the establishment of the task managers system. Such a system, which works under the general oversight of IACSD, is based on a decentralized allocation of responsibilities for coordination, facilitating information exchange and fostering joint action to those United Nations agencies whose mandates are particularly relevant to, and that have a critical mass of in-house expertise in particular thematic areas of, Agenda 21 and which, accordingly, are best placed to act as system-wide task managers in these areas. While in most programmatic areas of Agenda 21, the role of the task manager is performed by an individual organization or agency, in those areas that cross-cut the mandates and programmes of several organizations of the United Nations system, the function of the task manager is performed by an inter-agency group. This is the case for the ACC Subcommittee on Water Resources, and the ACC Subcommittee on Oceans and Coastal Areas.

5. In 1997, as part of preparations for the special session of the General Assembly which carried out a five-year assessment of progress achieved since the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, IACSD undertook a critical review of the experiences gained in the United Nations system in the area of sustainable

development. The results of this work were brought to the attention of the Assembly in the statement by ACC to the Assembly at its nineteenth special session (A/S-19/6, annex). In this statement, ACC underscored that the concept of sustainable development provided an over-arching policy framework for the entire spectrum of United Nations system-wide activities at the global, regional and country levels (para. 2), and called for the implementation of interrelated policies promoting economic development, improved social equity and environmental sustainability.

6. The General Assembly at its nineteenth special session, in the Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21, called for strengthening of IACSD of ACC and its system of task managers, with a view to further enhancing system-wide intersectoral cooperation and coordination for the implementation of Agenda 21 and for the promotion of coordinated follow-up to the major United Nations conferences in the area of sustainable development (para. 120).

7. Analysis of ongoing work in the United Nations system aimed at accelerating progress in the implementation of Agenda 21 and the Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21 is contained below.

Recent developments in IACSD

8. IACSD continuously underscored the importance of effective translation of the outcomes of policy deliberations in the Commission on Sustainable Development and in other relevant intergovernmental bodies into implementation activities of the organizations of the United Nations system, including those at the regional and country levels. Accordingly, at its twelfth (September 1998) and thirteenth (March 1999) meetings, IACSD considered, in addition to several standing items in its agenda such as those related to the implementation of the decisions and recommendations of the Commission on Sustainable Development as well as preparations for the Commission's forthcoming sessions, a number of issues that were of a more long-term nature and had a direct practical bearing on strengthening the joint capacity of the United Nations system to support various global-, regional- and national-level activities aimed at further implementation of Agenda 21. These included:

(a) Developing new or rationalizing existing guidelines used by international organizations in their policy advisory services and technical cooperation, including training, and activities in support of national-level work in such areas as (i) development and implementation of national sustainable development strategies; (ii) integrated approach to land and water management; (iii) integration of sustainability concerns in national fiscal instruments; (iv) sustainable tourism; and (v) local sustainable development initiatives;

(b) Strengthening the effectiveness of the United Nations system's capacity to collect and disseminate information on sustainable development and making it more accessible to various users, particularly national Governments. This included work related to the development and application of indicators, including indicators of sustainable development, that would facilitate measuring progress towards the implementation of the integrated and coordinated follow-up of all aspects of major United Nations conferences and summits;

(c) Strengthening United Nations system coverage of waste management issues, including the elaboration of a common approach in the United Nations system in this area;

(d) Undertaking measures aimed at avoiding multiple inter-agency mechanisms of policy coordination at the global level in any given thematic area, through broadening the current system of task managers and clarifying the division of labour between the standing committees of ACC, such as IACSD and the Consultative Committee on Programme and Operational Questions (CCPOQ), so as to ensure, on the one hand, that the results of policy discussions in IACSD would be effectively translated by CCPOQ into specific modalities of United Nations system collaboration at the country level; and, on the other, that experiences gained in the work of CCPOQ would be regularly submitted to IACSD.

Recent developments in other inter-agency processes

Ad Hoc Inter-Agency Task Force on Energy

9. In response to the nineteenth special session of the General Assembly, IACSD, at its twelfth meeting in September 1998, decided to establish an Ad Hoc Inter-Agency Task Force on Energy with a view to ensuring a collaborative contribution of all relevant organizations of the United Nations system to the Commission on Sustainable Development process on energy and sustainable development. A preliminary report on the United Nations system-wide work plan on energy prepared for the ninth session of the Commission was reviewed by IACSD at its thirteenth meeting and subsequently IACSD requested the Task Force to finalize the preparation of a system-wide work plan on energy, atmosphere and transport for the period up

to 2001. The first meeting of the Task Force took place on 8 April 1999 at New York, in conjunction with the first session of the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources for Development.

10. Members of the Task Force agreed that activities to be undertaken were complementary and mutually supportive and that duplication of work, such as that undertaken by the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change,[3] should be avoided. Coordination and information-sharing are a prerequisite of the system. Members agreed that the advantages and disadvantages of energy options, the impact of energy from a social, economic and environment perspective and due consideration of the role of stakeholders, including the scientific and academic communities, should be made an integral part of the common approach. Task Force members reviewed activities currently under way and/or planned by them in preparation for the ninth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development. To enhance coordination and promote synergies among these activities and to better prepare for the ninth session of the Commission, it was decided to establish an electronic network. Task Force members agreed to provide updated information on ongoing and envisioned work so that a matrix of United Nations activities geared towards the ninth session of the Commission could be established.

11. The information will also be used for reports of the Secretary-General, to be prepared in support of the preparatory process for the ninth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development and submitted for consideration by the Open-ended Intergovernmental Group of Experts on Energy and Sustainable Development, as requested by the Commission at its seventh session. The Task Force will meet again in autumn 1999. This meeting will consider the state of preparations for the first meeting of the ad hoc Open-ended Intergovernmental Group of Experts on Energy and Sustainable Development and review the first draft of the study entitled "World Energy Assessment" currently prepared by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat and the World Energy Council.

Inter-agency work in support of the implementation of the outcome of the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests of the Commission on Sustainable Development and in support of the Commission's Intergovernmental Forum on Forests

12. The informal, high-level Inter-agency Task Force on Forests (ITFF) was created in 1995 to provide coherent support to the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests (IPF) of the Commission on Sustainable Development, and subsequently to the Commission's Intergovernmental Forum on Forests (IFF), by organizations within and outside the United Nations system. ITFF has provided support to the IPF/IFF process through: secondment of staff to the Secretariat; lead agency responsibility for preparation of draft reports of the Secretary-General and background documents; cooperation with Government-led initiatives in support of the programme of work of IPF/IFF; and implementation of IPF's proposals for action addressed to international organizations. In preparation for the nineteenth special session of the General Assembly, ITFF produced a joint plan for implementation of IPF's proposals for action entitled "Inter-agency partnership on forests: implementation of IPF proposals for action by the ITFF". This plan is currently being implemented to the extent possible. However, it is also being revised by ITFF in light of limited donor support. Recently, ITFF has embarked on other activities, for example, a joint multi-agency activity on forest fires, not included in the IFF mandate.

II. United Nations system response to the outcomes of the sixth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development

Freshwater

13. In response to the main decisions of the Commission on Sustainable Development at its sixth session in the field of freshwater, the organization members of the ACC Subcommittee on Water Resources, at its nineteenth session (see ACC/1998/18), made the following decisions:

(a) To provide briefings to interested delegations during the annual sessions of the Commission on Sustainable Development on the work of the Subcommittee in general and, in particular, on the decisions and recommendations contained in the report of its annual session. It was also decided that the annual reports of the Subcommittee would

be posted on the home page of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat on the Internet;

(b) To obtain the services of a consultant to assist the Subcommittee in reviewing its methods of work and to recommend ways in which the Subcommittee could enhance its coordination role, improve the transparency and visibility of its work and become more proactive in accelerating the implementation of chapter 18 of Agenda 21. The outcome of this exercise will be contained in a report of the Secretary-General to be submitted to the Commission at its eighth session;

(c) To begin the joint preparation of a report of the Secretary-General on progress made in providing safe water supply and sanitation for all during the 1990s, to be submitted to the Commission at its eighth session, the substantive session of 2000 of the Economic and Social Council and the fifty-fifth session of the General Assembly, as requested by the Assembly in its resolution 50/126 of 20 December 1995. The major aims of the report will be: (i) to provide up-to-date information on both water supply and sanitation coverage around the world, (ii) to evaluate the progress made in attaining the ultimate goal of providing safe water supply and sanitation for all, and (iii) to provide proposals for further action, particularly in developing countries and those with economies in transition;

(d) To coordinate and intensify efforts of the United Nations system at the country level, for example, efforts to reduce arsenic contamination of groundwater in Bangladesh and India;

(e) To invite the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) to enhance its cooperation with the United Nations system partners in the freshwater area, including in the implementation of the Global International Waters Assessment;

(f) To begin the preparation of a periodic World Water Development Report (WWDR) — along the lines of the *Human Development Report* — the first edition of which would be published in 2002 to coincide with the 10-year review of chapter 18 of Agenda 21. A first meeting of the core group of the WWDR (New York, February 1999) drafted the corresponding terms of reference and a follow-up expert meeting will be held in mid-1999 to finalize a concrete proposal for the publication of the WWDR.

Transfer of environmentally sound technology

14. The Commission on Sustainable Development at its sixth session, in decision 6/3,[4] called for work by the United Nations system, in particular by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat, UNEP, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), UNDP and the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), on a range of issues, including: transfer of environmentally sound technologies (ESTs); policies to promote sustainable production; national technology strategies; development of voluntary guidelines on technology partnerships; eco-efficiency; and environmental management at the enterprise level. The United Nations system is continuing and expanding existing activities and undertaking a number of new activities in accordance with that decision.

15. In 1998, UNEP and UNIDO continued development of their Cleaner Production Centres in developing countries. UNEP organized the Fifth International High-Level Seminar on Cleaner Production (Phoenix Park, Republic of Korea), which prepared an International Declaration on Cleaner Production. UNCTAD, in cooperation with the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat, organized an expert meeting on technology partnerships and capacity-building, and published the Advanced Technology Alert System (ATAS) XI report on that topic. UNCTAD and UNEP organized expert meetings on corporate "green" accounting and reporting. For 1999, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, in cooperation with other agencies, is organizing a regional expert meeting on national cleaner technology strategies, and an expert meeting on corporate environmental accounting. UNCTAD, in cooperation with the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, is preparing a publication on publicly owned technologies, drawing on the results of the 1998 expert meeting organized by the Republic of Korea. UNEP is undertaking a project to promote cleaner production investment in developing countries. UNDP, UNIDO, UNEP and other bodies are continuing to provide technical assistance to member States for the development, transfer and adaptation of environmentally sound technologies. The Global Environment Facility (GEF) and its implementing agencies (UNDP, UNEP and the World Bank) are assisting countries in the development and transfer of technologies in support of the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. The GEF and its implementing agencies also support developing country

clearing-house mechanism focal points of the Convention on Biological Diversity[5] with respect to implementing their national biodiversity information infrastructure. Other activities include work carried out by the International Trade Centre in close cooperation with the World Trade Organization, UNEP and the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) on the implications of the World Trade Organization agreements on international trade in EST and related products. The Department of Economic and Social Affairs is preparing an inventory of United Nations system activities for the implementation of Commission on Sustainable Development decision 6/3.

Capacity-building, education and public awareness and science for sustainable development

16. At its fourth session in 1996, the Commission on Sustainable Development initiated a work programme for the implementation of chapter 36 of Agenda 21 on education, public awareness and training. An expanded version of this work programme was adopted by the Commission at its sixth session in 1998. The work programme consists of 7 subprogrammes and 23 tasks.

17. By decision of its General Conference in late 1997, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) fully integrated its support to the Commission on Sustainable Development work programme with its own programme and budget. Responsibility within UNESCO lies with the transdisciplinary project Educating for a Sustainable Future, created in 1994 as an experimental, cross-sectoral unit mandated to mobilize UNESCO's numerous educational programmes, member States and other key actors towards education for sustainable development, in the framework of the integrated follow-up to the United Nations conferences and conventions.

18. Since launching the work programme in 1996, much progress has been made in advancing a new vision of education, public awareness and training as key instruments for achieving sustainable development. UNESCO as task manager has given highest priority to clarifying the concept and content of education for sustainable development in a collective way, principally through the preparation of the document Educating for a Sustainable Future: A Transdisciplinary Vision for Concerted Action in which the entire United Nations system, the World Bank, the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources — World Conservation Union (IUCN), the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the Organization of American States (OAS) and others participated.

19. Education, public awareness and training need to be integral components in regional, national and local strategies and plans. A survey of existing regional and national strategies and plans has been undertaken by UNESCO, in cooperation with the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and UNDP, to determine the extent to which education has been adequately addressed. The survey is to be published in 1999. The Education for All Assessment 2000 for basic education, being conducted by UNESCO and its partners within the follow-up to the Jomtien World Conference on Education for All: Meeting Basic Learning Needs, will provide insight to countries for the review of national policies and the reform of educational systems.

20. UNESCO has continued to develop the International Registry of Innovative Practices Promoting Education, Public Awareness and Training for Sustainability, in cooperation with the Government of the United States of America, Environment-Canada and the Canadian Man and the Biosphere Programme. The registry will provide a clearing-house mechanism consisting of nodes developed with a common protocol.

21. Efforts have been focused on implementing the articles concerning education within the Convention on Biological Diversity, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, particularly in Africa (A/49/84/Add.2, annex, appendix II), and on creating synergies among these conventions. Since the sixth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development, UNESCO, UNEP and IUCN as well as the secretariats of the conventions have begun a number of initiatives along these lines, targeted to specific countries or regions or to specific groups or sectors of society.

22. The World Conference on Science (Budapest, 26 June–1 July 1999) organized jointly by UNESCO and the International Council of Scientific Unions (ICSU) will pay particular attention to enhancing the role of science for sustainable development. The Conference organizers have proposed that the Science Agenda: Framework for Action to be adopted by the Conference include major action recommendations aimed at providing increased support to the further implementation of chapter 35 and the science-related components of many other chapters of Agenda 21.

Industry

23. The Commission on Sustainable Development at its sixth session called for a multi-stakeholder process to identify the key elements of a review of voluntary initiatives. Such a multi-stakeholder consultative meeting was organized with participants from business, trade unions, non-governmental organizations and selected Governments as well as representatives from UNEP and OECD in Toronto, Canada (10–12 March 1999). UNEP was a partner United Nations agency in the multi-stakeholder steering committee that led the preparations for this meeting. The report of the Toronto meeting (E/CN.17/1999/12) was prepared by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs in collaboration with UNEP and UNIDO. Future follow-up in this area will involve joint or separate actions by the stakeholder groups to generate further information on the impact and effectiveness of voluntary initiatives and agreements, with assistance from the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, UNEP, UNIDO, the International Labour Organization (ILO) and other relevant United Nations bodies, as appropriate.

III. Outcomes of the seventh session of the Commission on Sustainable Development that call for action by the United Nations system

24. The Commission on Sustainable Development at its seventh session adopted a number of decisions and recommendations that call for strengthened cooperation and interaction in the United Nations system. These outcomes of the Commission will be reviewed at the forthcoming fourteenth meeting of IACSD, as well as at the next meetings of relevant inter-agency bodies with a view to agreeing on the most effective course of action. The main results of the Commission's seventh session relevant to the work of the United Nations system are outlined below.

Oceans and seas

25. The Commission on Sustainable Development at its seventh session addressed oceans and seas as its sectoral theme and adopted a comprehensive decision including recommendations for action by the United Nations system. The Commission noted that, because of the complex and interrelated nature of oceans and seas, there was a special need for international coordination and cooperation on the subject. The Commission called for a more integrated approach, building on existing arrangements, to address all legal, economic, social and environmental aspects of oceans and seas. The Commission invited the Secretary-General to undertake measures to ensure better coordination of the United Nations work on oceans and seas and to suggest initiatives to improve coordination and integration.

26. The Commission invited the Secretary-General, working in cooperation with the executive heads of organizations of the United Nations system, to undertake measures to improve the effectiveness of the ACC Subcommittee on Oceans and Coastal Areas, including through making the work of the Subcommittee more transparent and responsive to member States.

27. The Commission expressed grave concern over the slow progress on the implementation of the Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities (A/51/116, annex II). It welcomed the recent decision of the UNEP Governing Council (decision 20/19 B) of 5 February 1999 in which the Governing Council stressed the need for urgent measures aimed at expediting progress in the implementation of the Global Programme of Action; and reiterated its appeal to the governing bodies of relevant United Nations agencies and organizations to review their role in, and contribution to, the implementation of the Global Programme of Action. The Commission invited those organizations to provide information on progress in this area for inclusion in the annual report of the Secretary-General to the General Assembly.

28. The Commission invited all organizations concerned with aspects of the oceans to consider whether their programmes of work provided sufficient consideration of the potential impact of increased climate variability, and to review what needed to be done to ensure adequate prediction and understanding of the impacts on coastal and marine areas of phenomena such as El Niño. The Commission also endorsed the International Coral Reef Initiative (ICRI) call to action, urging implementation of complementary actions by States, intergovernmental organizations and other bodies, in particular the Convention on Biological Diversity, non-governmental organizations and the private sector.

29. The Commission reiterated its call for the sponsoring organizations of the Joint Group of Experts on the Scientific Aspects of Marine Environmental Protection (GESAMP) to review the Group's methods of work with a view to improving its effectiveness and inclusiveness, while maintaining its status as a source of agreed, independent scientific advice. The Commission welcomed plans for an

August 1999 inter-secretariat meeting called by the International Maritime Organization (IMO), as administrative secretariat of GESAMP, to review the Group's terms of reference and modus operandi.

30. The Commission recommended that the General Assembly establish a consultative process on oceans and seas, taking into account inputs from United Nations system bodies. The Commission further suggested that the Assembly should work to strengthen the existing structures and mandates within the United Nations system in this area. The results of the Commission's review of oceans and seas will be considered by the Assembly at its fifty-fourth session.

Tourism and sustainable development

31. The Commission adopted an international work programme on sustainable tourism development calling for a variety of activities to be undertaken by Governments, the tourism industry, other major groups and international organizations. The Commission urged Governments to support initiatives of organizations like ILO and the World Health Organization (WHO) that would contribute to sustainable tourism.

32. The Commission called on Governments, major groups and the United Nations system, in close collaboration with the World Tourism Organization, and building on work by UNEP, UNESCO, UNCTAD, ILO and UNDP, and in accordance with the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States,[6] to consider a number of initiatives and to keep the Commission on Sustainable Development informed on progress achieved.

33. The Commission called for development of sustainable tourism to increase benefits for host communities and maintain their cultural and environmental integrity and for efforts to encourage more responsible behaviour among tourists. The Commission called for activities in support of the International Year of Ecotourism, the International Year of Mountains and the International Coral Reef Initiative.

34. The Commission called for assessment of voluntary initiatives and guidelines relating to sustainable tourism, and for cooperation with UNEP in developing guiding principles for sustainable tourism development. Consideration should also be given to establishing a global information network on sustainable tourism, taking into account the work of the World Tourism Organization, regional mechanisms and major groups.

35. The Commission invited the World Tourism Organization to consider the participation of major groups in the development of its global code of ethics for tourism. The Commission invited IMO and other agencies to evaluate whether existing regulations and compliance on marine pollution were sufficient to protect fragile coastal zones. The Commission invited the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity to further consider existing knowledge and best practice on sustainable tourism and biological diversity with a view to contributing to international guidelines for activities related to sustainable tourism development in vulnerable ecosystems and habitats.

36. The Commission invited the United Nations Secretariat and the World Tourism Organization, in consultation with major groups and other international organizations, to facilitate the establishment of a working group on tourism to assess financial leakages and determine how to maximize benefits for indigenous and local communities, and to prepare a joint initiative to improve information availability and capacity-building.

Consumption and production patterns

37. The Commission at its seventh session reaffirmed that the principal goals of changing consumption and production patterns should be pursued by all countries, with the developed countries taking the lead. The Commission noted that the overriding issues of poverty eradication and changing consumption and production patterns should be addressed in the context of the consideration of agriculture, financial resources, trade and investment in 2000, and energy and transport in 2001.

38. The Commission decided that activities under the Commission's existing international work programme on sustainable consumption and production patterns should continue, and that consideration should be given to four new priority areas: (a) effective policy development and implementation; (b) natural resource management and cleaner production; (c) globalization and its impacts on consumption and production patterns; and (d) urbanization and its impacts on consumption and production patterns.

39. In the area of natural resource management and cleaner production, the Commission called for efforts to promote public and private investments in cleaner production, eco-efficiency and the sustainable use of natural resources, taking into account the work of the World Tourism Organization. The Commission called on UNEP and UNIDO, through their Cleaner Production Centres, to

enhance their support to enterprises in developing countries and countries with economies in transition.

40. The Commission called for studies of the impacts of globalization, including trade, investment and the role of the financial sector in promoting sustainable consumption and production. In the area of urbanization, the Commission called for work on urban energy, transport, water, sanitation, waste management, public health, and city planning and management, with particular reference to the work of the Commission on Human Settlements.

IV. Constraints faced by the United Nations system in the field of sustainable development and recommendations on how to address these constraints

41. Additional tasks such as those implied in many decisions of the Commission on Sustainable Development cannot be implemented fully by individual United Nations agencies without additional resources. For example, no additional resources have been provided for the Commission work programme on education, public awareness and training for sustainable development. UNESCO, as task manager for this work programme — which spans not only the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development but all of the major United Nations conferences — has not had recourse to additional resources to reinforce its capacity to further this work programme. Along the same lines, there exists the need for necessary financial and human resources to implement the Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities (GPA), as was recently recognized by the Governing Council of UNEP. Governments and respective governing and budgetary bodies should be encouraged to work together to provide the resources to implement their decisions particularly at the outset. Similarly, as reported in paragraph 12 above, limited donor support led to a number of serious difficulties in the implementation by organizations forming the Inter-agency Task Force on Forests of proposals for action adopted by the Commission's Intergovernmental Panel on Forests.

42. Other constraints for the United Nations system are related to the lack of institutional capacity, vague mandates and roles, and lack of clearly defined priorities, both for individual organizations and for the United Nations system as a whole, as sometimes determined by intergovernmental decisions. The United Nations system is attempting to address these issues through various inter-agency consultative processes and consultations, the results of which often need to be reported back to respective governing bodies in order that clearer guidance may be solicited. Organizations of the United Nations system are also undertaking steps towards streamlining sometimes lengthy and bureaucratic procedures, and promoting better managerial practices and greater motivation of staff. Such measures could go a long way towards helping agencies to address their responsibilities in a more efficient and effective way.

43. There is often a perception that the follow-up to the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development and other United Nations conferences is primarily the responsibility of the United Nations system in general, and of task managers in particular. It needs to be emphasized that actions need to take place primarily at national level, with Governments, non-governmental organizations, the private sector and others as the main actors. The role of the United Nations system is, *inter alia*, to facilitate cooperation among major actors to enhance action at national level.

44. Some of the constraints are related to inconsistent decisions in various governing bodies of organizations of the United Nations system. As noted in section III above, a matter of considerable concern to Governments meeting in the Commission on Sustainable Development, the Governing Council of UNEP and elsewhere has been the slow rate of progress in implementing the Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities (GPA). While States are responsible for the overall implementation of the Global Programme of Action at the national and, as appropriate, regional and global levels, with respect to the clearing-house mechanism (that is to say, a referral system providing access to current sources of information, practical experiences, and scientific and technical expertise, as well as possible funding sources), United Nations agencies and organizations are expected to take lead responsibility for a number of specific pollutant source categories, as defined in General Assembly resolution 51/189 of 16 December 1996. The development of the clearing house has been hindered, however, by the fact that the governing bodies of only three agencies (WHO), International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and UNESCO/ Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC) have adopted resolutions in support of the Global Programme of Action, and WHO, IMO and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) have indicated they would be unable to take the lead agency role for their respective source categories without additional financial

resources. On the other hand, it should be noted that, in addition to responsibilities defined for these by Assembly resolution 51/189, IAEA, UNESCO/IOC and UNEP have joined forces in an active inter-agency programme on marine pollution, providing data quality assurance services to regional programmes and national laboratories. Governments are therefore urged to follow up their agreement, as contained in Assembly resolution 51/189, UNEP Governing Council decisions 19/14 A of 7 February 1997[7] and 20/19 B, and in the decisions of the fourth and seventh sessions of the Commission on Sustainable Development, to take the necessary action within the governing bodies of relevant United Nations agencies and organizations to ensure that these organizations have the mandate for, and give appropriate priority to, the implementation of the Global Programme of Action.

45. A number of specific difficulties are related to fostering progress in some intersectoral aspects of sustainable development, such as health. Health is too often understood only in terms of medical services and as the responsibility of the Ministry of Health. At the country level, government health services have been cut back in many countries in the context of economic reforms, including structural adjustment. Health sector reforms have focused on ensuring financial viability of health-care services, often resulting in a neglect of public and environmental health. The United Nations system needs to address health issues, particularly those related to preventive health, in relation to sustainable development. Health professionals need to be better informed of the linkages between health and development, and professionals in other sectors need to be informed of the relationship between their sectoral issues and health. Consideration of health issues needs to be strengthened in sustainable development planning, in particular through impact assessment. WHO working in close collaboration with other United Nations agencies is undertaking activities to improve understanding of the links between health and various development activities, as well as global issues such as the health impacts of climate change, and development issues such as natural resource management and land-use changes.

46. Finally, a more coordinated approach to the follow-up of all recent major United Nations conferences is needed in order to achieve synergies and to ensure a more efficient and effective use of limited resources. This requires greater efforts, taking fully into account the outcomes of relevant deliberations in the Economic and Social Council, aimed at promoting more effective coordination of both policy development and implementation activities at all levels: in the United Nations system, within national Governments and among various non-governmental constituencies involved in this work. As for the United Nations system, ACC, upon recommendations of ACC, has started a process aimed at expanding the task managers' system with a view to avoiding multiple inter-agency mechanisms of policy coordination at the global level. Among the goals of this endeavour is to consider effective ways of broadening the task managers' role from that of servicing and carrying out the mandates related to United Nations Conference on Environment and Development follow-up to one encompassing responsibility for facilitating overall collaboration in respective thematic areas on a system-wide basis, and incorporating in their work the mandates of other major conferences together with those of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development.

Notes

[1] *Report of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, Rio de Janeiro, 3–14 June 1992*, vol. I, *Resolutions Adopted by the Conference* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.93.I.8 and corrigendum), resolution 1, annex II.

[2] General Assembly resolution S-19/2 of 28 June 1997, annex.

[3] A/AC.237/18 (Part II)/Add.1 and Corr.1, annex I.

[4] *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 1998, Supplement No. 9* (E/1998/29), chap. I, sect. B, decision 6/3.

[5] United Nations Environment Programme, *Convention on Biological Diversity* (Environmental Law and Institution Programme Activity Centre), June 1992.

[6] *Report of the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, Bridgetown, Barbados, 25 April–6 May 1994* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.94.I.18 and corrigenda), chap. I, resolution 1, annex II.

[7] *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-second Session, Supplement No. 25* (A/52/25), annex, decision 19/14 A.